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## New Testament Studies in Poland

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This short essay on the state of New Testament studies in Poland, divided in three parts, answers the following questions: Who? What? How?

Prof. Waldemar Chrostowski presented the development and perspectives of the biblical studies in Poland. According to his paper, their prospects result from their development so far. The same dependency applies to the relationship between the current state of New Testament studies in Poland and their future. Their potential is shown in the following circumstances: a significant number of biblical scholars; the majority of which took specialized courses in foreign academic centers and cooperate with one another via, inter alia, the Association of Polish Biblical Scholars; the activities of faculties of theology, thanks to their full academic rights, stimulating researches. Results of scientific work can now be widely popularized during symposia and in publications. How do the New Testament studies look like in the context of biblical studies? Let us analyze a few examples.

On the basis of information provided by the latest list of members of the Association of Polish Biblical Scholars<sup>1</sup> it can easily be calculated that at least 200 of them devoted their latest scientific papers (so called professorship books, habilitation and doctorate theses, licentiate theses) to the second part of the Christian Bible. The number constitutes more than 60 percent of all the biblical scholars being members of the association.

In Poland there are no journals devoted exclusively to New Testament studies, but the texts concerning this field of studies are published on regular basis in the journals of biblical scholarship<sup>2</sup>. The international and national symposia

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Zeszyty Naukowe Stowarzyszenia Biblistów Polskich* 14 (2017) 33-293.

<sup>2</sup> *The Biblical Annals* and *Verbum Vitae*, both published by the Institute of Biblical Sciences in the Faculty of Theology of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin; *Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny* by the Polish Theological Society; *Biblica et Patristica Thoruniensia* by Faculty of Theology of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń; *Scriptura Sacra* by the Faculty of Theology of the University of Opole; *Scripta Biblica et Orientalia* by the Faculty of Humanities of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin; *Zeszyty Naukowe Stowarzyszenia Biblistów Polskich* by the Association of Polish Biblical Scholars.

always include papers devoted to the area of biblical studies in question. For example, during the latest edition of the 12th International Biblical Days, organized by the Institute of Biblical Studies of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin devoted to anthropology in the Scriptures, 50 percent of papers concerned New Testament.

Due to the topic of the presentation one more cycle of conferences initiated in 2014 and organized by the Institute of Biblical Sciences of the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University must be mentioned. Each year the cycle is devoted to one book of the New Testament. Its participants deal with issues grouped in three categories: genesis of a selected book, interpretation of the texts with application of new methods and its interpretation nowadays. In 2017 the conference was devoted to the Gospel according to John.

Answering the question “Who?” I would like to draw attention to a phenomenon that is typical for the entire biblical studies in Poland and applies especially to New Testament studies. Each of the scholars experiences a huge demand for academic work from theologians and other scientists dealing with humanities. Moreover, there is a significant need to circulate the results of the contemporary research in the popular and pastoral realm<sup>3</sup>.

Now let us try to answer the second question. What is going on in New Testament studies in Poland? It is impossible to summarize in a few minutes even the most important research conducted in the major academic centers in Poland. Therefore, let us have just a few glimpses on the work carried out.

One should mention books and articles written by Prof. Roman Bartnicki of the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University. His works are very valuable for exegetes dealing with the New Testament and the early Christianity: since the 80s he has been popularizing the current trends and approaches in the studies on the narrative books of the second part of the Bible<sup>4</sup>. The same academic center is currently working on application of elements of social science criticism to interpretation of the Bible. A monograph by Prof. Janusz Kręciński<sup>5</sup> included Polish biblical studies into the body of research that applies methods which have been developed within the framework of cultural anthropology, sociology and history<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> To give an example, for four years I have been writing short commentaries on the Sunday Scripture Readings in *Gość Niedzielny*, the biggest Polish weekly magazine sold in 120 thousand copies.

<sup>4</sup> *Ewangelie synoptyczne. Geneza i interpretacja* [Synoptic Gospels. Genesis and Interpretation] 4th ed. (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego 2012); [with K. Klósek], *Metody interpretacji Nowego Testamentu. Wprowadzenie* [Methods of New Testament Interpretation] (Kraków: Petrus 2014).

<sup>5</sup> *Honor i wstyd w interpretacji Ewangelii. Szkice z egzegezy antropologiczno-kulturowej* [Honor and Shame in the Gospels' interpretation. Sketches from exegesis anthropological-cultural] (Warszawa: Verbinum 2013).

<sup>6</sup> In the forward to the book John J. Pilch expressed his conviction that readers will be able to analyze other books of the Old and the New Testament using the dynamics of honor and shame. Thanks to

The studies of two other scholars of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin deserve mentioning. Dr. Adam Kubiś in the Gabalda Editions published a research monograph, which is the first, and so far the only one, monograph-length study of the Johannine use of the Book of Zechariah as a whole<sup>7</sup>. In five chapters, he analyzes two explicit quotations of Zechariah, one uncertain quotation, and a significant number of allusions and echoes. The main contribution of this study is to show the relevance of Zechariah for the Johannine christology and pneumatology, both centered around the idea of the temple. Dr. Marcin Kowalski in his Ph.D. thesis, published by the University Press of America<sup>8</sup>, by employing rhetorical approach, argues for the unified character of 2 Corinthians. According to him, against the majority of interpreters, the four final chapters of the epistle should be labeled not as an apology, or a parody of the opponents' boasting, but as periautologia (self-praise speech) which bears similarities to ancient encomiastic discourses, to the speeches by Isocrates, and to the paradoxical boasting of Socrates.

Today two projects immensely important for research on the relation between the New Testament and Judaism are presented: the inter-university research on the Septuagint and an edition of the text of Targum Neofiti with the Polish translation<sup>9</sup>. An outstanding event this year was publication of Polish Nestle-Aland version carefully prepared by New Testament scholars of the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Cracow<sup>10</sup>. Thanks to this project precious materials are offered, helpful in didactics of biblical subjects and supporting the academic research work.

Answering the question "What?", attention should be drawn to the achievements of the youngest biblical scholars, who execute projects financed by the National Science Centre – a government agency – supervised by the Ministry of

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this work one can speak of reception of achievements of New Testament studies in the field of studies on the books of the Old Testament. Already last year in the course of the habilitation proceedings a monograph was presented that integrates vital elements of this approach in the interpretation of the first five chapters of the Book of Wisdom: *Honor sprawiedliwego i wstyd bezbożnego w antropologicznokulturowej interpretacji Mdr 1–5* [Honor of the Righteous and Shame of the Godless in a Cultural Anthropological Interpretation of Wis 1-5] (Warszawa – Ząbki: Bractwo Słowa Bożego – Apostolicum 2015).

<sup>7</sup> *The Book of Zechariah in the Gospel of John* (Pendé: Gabalda 2012).

<sup>8</sup> *Transforming Boasting of Self into Boasting in the Lord. The Development of the Pauline Periautologia in 2 Cor 10–13* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America 2013).

<sup>9</sup> *Targum Neofiti 1. I. Księga Rodzaju. II. Księga Wyjścia. Tekst aramejski – przekład – aparat krytyczny* [Targum Neofiti 1. I. The Book of Genesis. II. The Book of Exodus. Aramaic Text – Translation – Critical Apparatus – Notes] (Biblia Aramejska [Aramaic Bible]; Lublin: Gaudium 2014-2017).

<sup>10</sup> *Nowy Testament grecki i polski = Novum Testamentum Graece et Polonice. Tekst grecki Novum Testamentum Graece na podstawie dzieła Eberharda i Erwina Nestle 28th ed.* (eds. B & K. Aland – J. Karavidopoulos – C.M. Martini – B.M. Metzger) (tekst polski: *Biblia Tysiąclecia*, 5th ed. [eds. R. Bogacz – R. Mazur]) (Poznań: Pallottinum 2017).

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Science and Higher Education, set up to support basic research in Poland. Let us focus on the last two. The first one, completed by Marcin Moj, of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Silesia in Katowice, was devoted to the “sandwiches-techniques” of the Gospel according to Mark. This young scholar provided his readers with probably the most complete criteria of distinguishing between the sandwiches-techniques and explains absence of these compositions in the section of the Gospel “Jesus’ road to Jerusalem”. Another project, conducted by Monika Czarnuch, of the same University, examines the first commentary to the Gospel according to Mark written in Greek, which is Theophylact’s of Ohrid *Explanation of the Gospel of Mark*. This work is important in the context of studies on “Byzantine options” and, contrary to the common belief, proves a significant independence of the first Greek commentator from John Chrysostom and *Catena in Marcum*.

Obviously, this is not the only possible answer to the question “How?” (i.e. on the way of doing research on texts of the New Testament, characteristic for Polish biblical studies). Biblical texts are researched as historical documents of the earliest Christianity and literary works of the first century. The vast majority of Polish biblical scholars are also well-prepared theologians, who are aware of the importance of their research for theology as a whole and for each of its sub-disciplines. Therefore, using both the classical historical and critical method as well as the latest approaches which integrate historical and social sciences, literature and art sciences, their study is not confined to these types of research. Even if the texts may and should be examined within the framework of methodologies, adequate for social sciences and the history of religion, their choice as the material subject results from the fact that they are a testimony to the historical revelation. Due to this fact, the works of Polish biblical scholars are dominated by the content comprising this revelation: God, Christ, Holy Spirit, the image of man and the world and their destiny in the divine plan.

Thanks to this, Polish biblical studies, especially New Testament studies, do not duplicate research that may be carried out on other, non-theological, faculties, but constitute a proper interpretation of biblical texts, congruent with the assumptions, methods and purposes specified clearly also for other humanities.